



Self-Compassion as a Buffer Against Innovation Anxiety

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Abstract

Innovation frequently requires employees to work under uncertainty, expose unfinished ideas to evaluation, challenge established practices, tolerate possible rejection, and accept that experiments may fail. These conditions can generate anxiety even in organizations that publicly encourage creativity. The present study examines self-compassion as a potential psychological buffer against innovation anxiety, defined here as apprehension arising from anticipated failure, negative evaluation, competence threat, or uncertain outcomes during innovative work. Self-compassion involves responding to personal difficulty through self-kindness, recognition of common humanity, and balanced mindful awareness rather than harsh self-criticism or overidentification with failure. Neff's foundational research established the construct and its measurement, while later studies linked self-compassion with lower fear of failure, more adaptive responses to self-relevant setbacks, greater self-improvement motivation, and reduced anxiety under ego threat.

Because no authentic organizational dataset was supplied, a transparent synthetic sample of 460 hypothetical employees was generated. The analytical framework incorporated self-compassion, fear of failure, psychological safety, perceived innovation pressure, and innovation anxiety. Standardized multiple regression and interaction analysis were used to examine whether self-compassion independently predicted lower anxiety and whether it weakened the positive association between fear of failure and innovation anxiety. In the simulation, fear of failure was the strongest positive predictor of innovation anxiety ($\beta = .534$), whereas self-compassion showed a substantial negative association ($\beta = -.422$). Psychological safety was also negatively associated with anxiety ($\beta = -.260$), while innovation pressure was positively associated ($\beta = .237$). The self-compassion $\times$ fear-of-failure interaction was negative ($\beta = -.094$), illustrating a statistically significant buffering pattern. The model explained 62.9% of variance in the synthetic anxiety outcome. Innovation anxiety was additionally negatively correlated with simulated innovative work behavior ($r = -.541$).

The study argues that self-compassion should not be interpreted as lowering standards or reducing achievement motivation. Experimental evidence indicates that responding compassionately to failure can increase motivation for self-improvement, while a 2021 entrepreneurship experiment found that a compassion-oriented intervention increased self-compassion and that greater self-compassion was associated with lower fear reactivity following a threatening venture obstacle. The paper concludes that sustainable innovation requires both supportive organizational conditions and individual emotion-regulation resources that allow employees to encounter uncertainty without translating every unsuccessful experiment into global self-judgment.



Keywords: self-compassion; innovation anxiety; fear of failure; innovative work behavior; psychological safety; innovation pressure; employee creativity; self-evaluative anxiety; organizational innovation; emotion regulation

1. Introduction

Innovation depends upon behavior that is psychologically more demanding than simply performing a familiar task correctly. Employees engaging in innovative work must identify problems, propose alternatives, promote ideas, persuade others, experiment with uncertain solutions, and sometimes implement changes that challenge existing routines. Scott and Bruce's influential model conceptualized individual innovation as a multistage workplace process, while Janssen's research similarly treated innovative work behavior as extending beyond idea generation toward idea promotion and implementation. These activities expose employees to uncertainty because the quality of a novel idea cannot always be established in advance. An employee may devote substantial effort to an initiative that is rejected, misunderstood, technically unsuccessful, politically inconvenient, or commercially ineffective. Innovation consequently combines opportunity with evaluative risk.

The psychological consequences of such risk are especially important when innovation becomes an explicit organizational expectation. Employees may be encouraged to “think differently” while simultaneously being evaluated on reliability, efficiency, reputation, promotion potential, and error avoidance. Yuan and Woodman's research demonstrated that innovative behavior is influenced partly by employees' expectations about performance consequences and image-related outcomes, indicating that the decision to innovate is shaped not only by creativity but also by anticipated social and career consequences. Fear of failure scholarship provides a complementary perspective. Cacciotti and colleagues conceptualized fear of failure as a negative affective response arising from cognitively appraised possibilities of failure and later developed a validated entrepreneurial fear-of-failure measure. Their research also emphasized that fear can sometimes motivate effort while at other times inhibiting action.

Self-compassion provides a theoretically useful resource for understanding why equivalent innovation demands may produce very different emotional reactions across employees. Neff conceptualized self-compassion through three interacting components: self-kindness rather than harsh self-judgment, common humanity rather than isolation, and mindfulness rather than overidentification with painful thoughts and emotions. This framework is particularly relevant to innovation because innovative activity virtually guarantees imperfection. Early ideas are incomplete, experiments frequently require revision, and novel solutions often emerge through feedback on what does not work. An employee who interprets one failed proposal as evidence of personal inadequacy is likely to experience innovation differently from an employee who can acknowledge disappointment without converting it into a global negative judgment of the self.

A substantial evidence base supports this proposed buffering mechanism. Neff, Hsieh, and Dejjitterat found that self-compassion was associated with mastery-oriented motivation and more adaptive coping with perceived academic failure, with lower fear of failure playing an explanatory role. Leary and colleagues showed across five studies that self-compassion shaped responses to unpleasant self-relevant events, while Neff, Kirkpatrick, and Rude found that self-compassion buffered anxiety in

an ego-threatening situation more effectively than self-esteem. Breines and Chen subsequently demonstrated experimentally that treating oneself compassionately after failure can increase motivation to improve rather than encouraging complacency. Most directly for high-uncertainty work, Engel and colleagues experimentally examined entrepreneurs facing a threatening venture obstacle and found that a loving-kindness intervention increased self-compassion, which in turn was associated with lower fear reactivity.

2. Objectives of the Study

2.1 To Examine Self-Compassion as a Negative Predictor of Innovation Anxiety

The first objective is to examine whether employees represented as higher in self-compassion experience lower innovation anxiety. The proposed mechanism is not indifference to performance. Self-compassion allows individuals to acknowledge limitations and unsuccessful outcomes without escalating them into persistent self-condemnation.

Existing evidence indicates that self-compassion is associated with lower anxiety during self-evaluative threat, more adaptive responses to setbacks, and greater willingness to pursue self-improvement following failure. The present study therefore expects self-compassion to retain a negative association with innovation anxiety even after fear of failure, innovation pressure, and psychological safety are taken into account.

2.2 To Test Whether Self-Compassion Buffers Fear-of-Failure Effects

The second objective is to assess whether self-compassion changes the strength of the relationship between fear of failure and innovation anxiety. Fear of failure is expected to increase anxiety because innovative action exposes employees to uncertain performance and image consequences.

Self-compassion is hypothesized to weaken that relationship. This expectation is supported by Engel and colleagues' experimental entrepreneurship research showing that greater self-compassion following a brief loving-kindness intervention was associated with lower fear reactivity to a threatening venture obstacle.

2.3 To Consider Psychological Safety and Innovation Pressure as Contextual Conditions

The third objective is to position innovation anxiety within its organizational context. Employees should not be expected to regulate anxiety individually when organizational systems actively punish experimentation.

Psychological safety is therefore treated as a protective contextual predictor, whereas perceived innovation pressure is treated as a demand. Research on psychological safety consistently connects safe interpersonal climates with learning and willingness to engage in potentially risky workplace behavior. Innovation pressure, by contrast, is conceptualized here as perceived expectation to continuously produce novel and successful solutions.

3. Review of Literature

3.1 Self-Compassion, Failure, and Adaptive Self-Regulation

Neff's early theoretical work distinguished self-compassion from self-esteem by proposing a form of healthy self-relation that does not depend upon being superior, successful, or positively evaluated. Self-compassion becomes especially relevant when individuals encounter failure or inadequacy because it involves kindness toward the suffering self, recognition that imperfection is part of shared human experience, and balanced awareness of difficult emotion. The Self-Compassion Scale subsequently provided a widely used measurement framework for empirical research.

The distinction from self-esteem has particular importance for innovation. Innovation frequently creates conditions under which competence is temporarily uncertain. Employees may be highly experienced in ordinary work but comparatively inexperienced with a novel method, market, technology, or product idea. If emotional stability depends upon consistently demonstrating competence, innovation can become threatening to self-worth. Neff, Kirkpatrick, and Rude's laboratory work is informative because self-compassion remained associated with less anxiety under ego threat whereas self-esteem did not provide the same pattern of protection.

Neff, Hsieh, and Dejjitterat examined self-compassion in relation to achievement goals and responses to academic failure. Their findings associated self-compassion with mastery-oriented goals and lower fear of failure, supporting the argument that compassion toward oneself does not require withdrawal from demanding goals. Allen and Leary's review similarly conceptualized self-compassion as relevant to adaptive coping with stress rather than as passive avoidance.

Leary and colleagues extended this evidence by examining reactions to negative self-relevant events across five studies. Their work indicates that self-compassion alters how individuals cognitively and emotionally process difficult events. This process has direct relevance to innovation because feedback on a novel idea is inherently self-relevant when employees have invested creativity, identity, effort, or reputation in the proposal.

3.2 Fear of Failure, Innovation Risk, and Innovative Work Behavior

Innovation requires movement beyond established routines and therefore creates uncertainty regarding both technical outcomes and interpersonal evaluation. Scott and Bruce described innovative behavior as a process involving idea generation, championing, and implementation. Janssen similarly conceptualized innovative work behavior as activity extending across multiple phases and demonstrated that job demands relate differently to innovative behavior depending on perceived fairness. Innovation is therefore not purely cognitive creativity; it is a socially embedded behavioral process requiring effort and exposure.

Yuan and Woodman offered an especially relevant explanation for why employees may hesitate to innovate. Their research found that employees' innovative behavior was influenced by expectations concerning performance benefits, image gains, and image risks. Employees may therefore remain silent about potentially valuable ideas not because they lack creativity but because the anticipated personal consequences of proposing them appear unfavorable.

Fear of failure provides another important explanatory mechanism. Cacciotti and colleagues' work reconceptualized entrepreneurial fear of failure as a multifaceted affective response grounded in



cognitive appraisal rather than a simple stable personality trait. Their later scale-development research formalized measurement of entrepreneurial fear of failure and reinforced its relevance to decision making under uncertainty. Entrepreneurship is not identical to employee innovation, but both contexts involve uncertain outcomes, personal investment, evaluation, and potential loss.

Engel, Noordijk, Spoelder, and van Gelderen provide the most direct bridge between self-compassion and innovation-related failure concerns available within the pre-2022 literature. Their study experimentally exposed entrepreneurs to a brief loving-kindness intervention and then examined responses to a threatening venture obstacle. The intervention increased self-compassion, and greater self-compassion was associated with lower entrepreneurial fear reactivity. This evidence provides a strong conceptual precedent for expecting self-compassion to weaken anxiety when innovative work makes failure personally salient.

3.3 Psychological Safety, Innovation Climate, and Organizational Responsibility

Innovation takes place within social systems. Employees interpret whether an unsuccessful idea will be treated as useful learning, tolerable experimentation, evidence of incompetence, or grounds for punishment. Psychological safety offers a well-established framework for understanding these judgments.

Edmondson introduced team psychological safety as a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking and demonstrated its relationship with learning behavior. Innovation involves comparable interpersonal risks: proposing an unconventional idea, questioning current procedures, asking for help with an unfamiliar technology, acknowledging that an experiment failed, or challenging a senior colleague's assumption.

Baer and Frese extended psychological-safety reasoning into organizational innovation. Their study of 47 mid-sized German companies found that climates for initiative and psychological safety complemented process innovation and were positively associated with longitudinal return-on-assets change and firm goal achievement. Their findings indicate that implementing innovation without creating a climate supportive of initiative and interpersonal risk may limit the value of innovation efforts.

Newman, Donohue, and Eva's systematic review identified 83 articles in the psychological-safety literature and documented the construct's relationships with work outcomes across individual and group levels. Psychological safety should therefore be treated as more than a subjective preference for pleasant teamwork. It affects whether employees believe that potentially consequential interpersonal actions can be undertaken without unacceptable social cost.

Self-compassion and psychological safety may operate through complementary mechanisms. Psychological safety answers the interpersonal question, "What will happen if other people see this attempt fail?" Self-compassion addresses the intrapersonal question, "How will I treat myself if this attempt fails?" A sustainable innovation environment arguably requires credible answers to both.

Workplace self-compassion evidence also supports an organizational rather than purely individual interpretation. Kotera and Van Gordon's 2021 systematic review concluded that self-compassion training can improve self-compassion and work-related well-being outcomes, but they emphasized limitations in the evidence base and the need for stronger methodological quality and

broader occupational samples. Workplace intervention research should therefore avoid implying that self-compassion training can compensate for fundamentally unsafe or punitive organizational systems.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design and Analytical Framework

The present study adopts a simulation-based quantitative design supported by an integrative theoretical review. Simulation was selected because no authentic employee dataset was supplied. This choice makes it possible to demonstrate the proposed model statistically without inventing actual participants, organizations, industries, demographic characteristics, innovation projects, or observed employee outcomes.

The synthetic dataset comprises 460 hypothetical employee observations. Five principal variables were generated: self-compassion, fear of failure, psychological safety, innovation pressure, and innovation anxiety. An additional innovative-work-behavior variable was generated to examine the plausibility of a downstream behavioral association.

The primary research model treats innovation anxiety as the dependent variable. Self-compassion and psychological safety are expected to reduce anxiety, while fear of failure and innovation pressure are expected to increase it. A self-compassion $\times$ fear-of-failure interaction tests whether greater compassion toward the self reduces the strength of fear-based innovation anxiety.

Table 1: Proposed Operationalization of the Study Variables

Construct	Conceptual Definition	Illustrative Measurement Approach	Analytical Role
Self-Compassion	Capacity to respond to one's own difficulty, inadequacy, or failure through self-kindness, common humanity, and mindful balance	1–5 composite conceptually informed by Neff's Self-Compassion Scale	Primary protective predictor
Fear of Failure	Negative affective and cognitive response to anticipated failure and its possible consequences	1–5 composite informed by established fear-of-failure research	Primary risk predictor
Psychological Safety	Perceived interpersonal safety for taking risks, asking questions, admitting mistakes, and expressing unconventional ideas	1–5 workplace climate composite	Contextual protective predictor
Innovation Pressure	Perceived expectation to continuously generate, advocate, or successfully implement novel ideas	Proposed 1–5 work-demand composite	Contextual risk predictor

Construct	Conceptual Definition	Illustrative Measurement Approach	Analytical Role
Innovation Anxiety	Anticipatory apprehension involving uncertainty, self-evaluative threat, possible failure, image concern, and tension during innovative work	Proposed 1–5 composite; not presented as a previously validated scale	Dependent variable
Innovative Work Behavior	Idea generation, promotion, and implementation directed toward improvement or novelty	1–5 illustrative behavioral composite	Secondary outcome

Source/Note: Self-compassion measurement is grounded in Neff's validated measurement work, psychological safety in Edmondson's framework, innovative behavior in Scott and Bruce and Janssen, and fear of failure in Cacciotti and colleagues. The quantitative observations in this manuscript are synthetic.

4.2 Synthetic Data Generation and Model Specification

All constructs were represented on bounded scales ranging from 1 to 5. Self-compassion, fear of failure, psychological safety, and innovation pressure were generated with sufficient variance to represent employees at comparatively low through high levels of each construct.

Innovation anxiety was generated as a function of lower self-compassion, higher fear of failure, lower psychological safety, higher innovation pressure, and an interaction between self-compassion and fear of failure. The interaction coefficient was designed so that the positive relationship between fear of failure and innovation anxiety became weaker as self-compassion increased.

Innovative work behavior was separately generated as negatively associated with innovation anxiety and positively associated with self-compassion, psychological safety, and innovation pressure. This secondary relationship was included to illustrate the theoretical possibility that some innovation pressure may stimulate effort even while excessive anxiety undermines constructive innovative behavior. Research has long shown that the relationship between workplace demands and innovation depends upon contextual conditions rather than following a universally negative pattern.

4.3 Statistical Procedures, Reproducibility, and Ethics

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each construct. Variables were standardized prior to regression so that coefficients could be compared directly.

Multiple linear regression estimated the independent effects of self-compassion, fear of failure, psychological safety, innovation pressure, and the self-compassion $\times$ fear-of-failure interaction on innovation anxiety. Model explanatory performance was summarized using (R^2). A Pearson correlation was additionally calculated between innovation anxiety and innovative work behavior.

A contour graph was generated from the fitted regression model to show predicted innovation anxiety across combinations of self-compassion and fear of failure while other predictors were held at their sample means. This visualization is particularly useful for the research question because it presents the proposed buffering relationship across the full range of both constructs rather than comparing only two arbitrary categories.

No institutional ethics approval or informed consent was required because the analysis contains no human participants, personnel records, mental-health records, performance data, or organizationally identifiable information. A future empirical study should obtain appropriate ethical approval, maintain strict confidentiality, and ensure that employees' reports of anxiety or fear of failure cannot be accessed by supervisors for performance-management purposes.

5. Analysis

5.1 Descriptive Pattern of the Simulated Constructs

The synthetic dataset produced a mean self-compassion score of 3.16 with a standard deviation of 0.79. Mean fear of failure was 2.97 (SD = 0.80), psychological safety averaged 3.23 (SD = 0.74), and innovation pressure averaged 3.06 (SD = 0.76).

Innovation anxiety produced a mean of 2.61 with a standard deviation of 0.76, while innovative work behavior averaged 3.01 (SD = 0.65). These statistics describe only the generated dataset and should not be used as estimates of actual employee populations.

The overall synthetic pattern was deliberately constructed to permit employees with equivalent levels of innovation pressure to differ considerably in innovation anxiety depending on their internal and interpersonal resources. This design reflects the theoretical argument that challenging innovative work need not create equivalent emotional consequences for every employee.

5.2 Multivariable Prediction of Innovation Anxiety

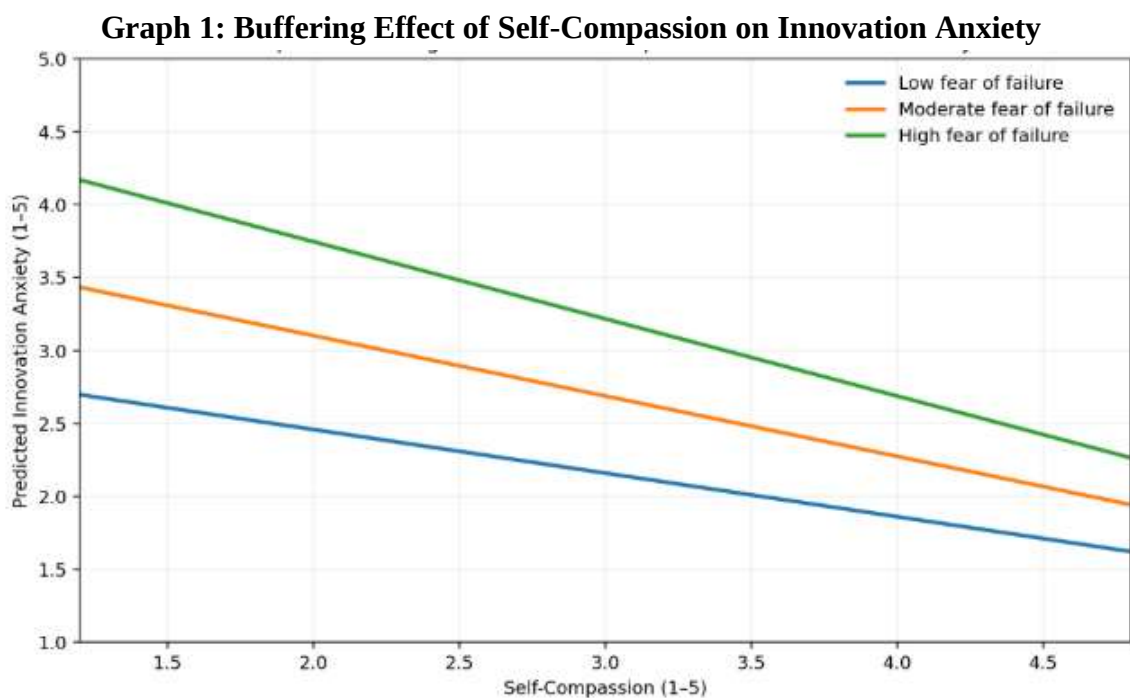
Table 2: Simulated Standardized Regression Predicting Innovation Anxiety

Predictor	Standardized β	p-value	Direction	Analytical Interpretation
Self-Compassion	-0.422	< .001	Negative	Higher self-compassion is associated with substantially lower innovation anxiety
Fear of Failure	0.534	< .001	Positive	Strongest predictor; fear of failure markedly increases innovation anxiety
Psychological Safety	-0.260	< .001	Negative	Safer interpersonal climates are associated with lower innovation anxiety
Innovation Pressure	0.237	< .001	Positive	Greater pressure to innovate increases anxiety after other predictors are

Predictor	Standardized β	p-value	Direction	Analytical Interpretation
				controlled
Self-Compassion $\times$ Fear of Failure	-0.094	< .001	Buffering interaction	Self-compassion weakens the positive fear-of-failure–anxiety relationship
Model (R^2)	0.629	—	—	62.9% of simulated variance explained

Note: N = 460 synthetic employee observations. Coefficients are standardized simulation outputs and must not be interpreted as real-world population estimates.

5.3 Buffering Pattern Across Self-Compassion and Fear of Failure



Source/Note: Author-generated synthetic dataset, N = 460. Predictions are derived from the simulated standardized regression model with psychological safety and innovation pressure held at their mean levels. No actual employee anxiety scores are represented.

The contour pattern shows that predicted innovation anxiety is highest when fear of failure is high and self-compassion is low. Moving horizontally toward higher self-compassion progressively reduces predicted anxiety even when fear of failure remains elevated.

This pattern provides a clearer interpretation of buffering than the main regression coefficient alone. At low fear of failure, self-compassion still produces a beneficial difference, but anxiety is

relatively limited across much of the range. When fear of failure becomes high, differences in self-compassion become increasingly consequential.

The upper-left region therefore represents the most psychologically vulnerable combination: strong fear of failure accompanied by limited ability to respond compassionately to personal imperfection. The lower-right region represents the most protected combination: comparatively low fear of failure and high self-compassion.

The graph should not be interpreted as an empirically validated clinical threshold. It visualizes the structure imposed by the synthetic model and offers testable expectations for a future organizational study.

Key Finding: Within the simulation, self-compassion shows both a strong direct negative relationship with innovation anxiety and a significant buffering effect that weakens the translation of fear of failure into anxiety.

6. Discussion

6.1 Self-Compassion as a Resource for Remaining Engaged With Uncertain Work

The principal theoretical contribution of the study is to frame self-compassion as a resource for remaining engaged with innovation despite the possibility of failure. This differs from interpreting compassion as emotional comfort after performance has already ended. Innovative work often requires individuals to anticipate failure before acting. The central problem is therefore not simply recovering afterward but tolerating sufficient uncertainty to attempt the work in the first place.

Neff's theory explains why self-compassion may be useful at precisely this stage. Self-kindness can reduce punitive self-talk, common humanity can normalize imperfection, and mindfulness can prevent momentary anxiety from becoming overidentified with the self. An employee may think, "This proposal could fail and that will be disappointing," without escalating the thought into, "If this proposal fails, everyone will discover that I am incompetent."

This distinction is especially relevant to innovation because experimentation generates informative failure. A prototype that does not function as expected can reveal design constraints. A proposal rejected by customers can clarify preferences. An unsuccessful pilot can expose implementation problems before a larger investment is made. Innovation systems lose this learning value when employees become psychologically unable to distinguish an unsuccessful attempt from an unsuccessful self.

Breines and Chen's experimental findings strongly support this interpretation. They found that self-compassion after failure increased rather than reduced motivation for improvement. Neff, Hsieh, and Dejitterat likewise associated self-compassion with mastery orientation and lower fear of failure. Thus, the managerial assumption that harsh self-criticism is necessary for high achievement is not supported by this body of evidence.

6.2 Fear of Failure, Psychological Safety, and the Two Sources of Innovation Threat

The second major implication is that innovation anxiety can arise from at least two distinguishable sources: internal self-evaluative threat and external interpersonal threat. Fear of failure can operate

internally when employees interpret unsuccessful outcomes as evidence of personal deficiency. It can also operate socially when employees expect colleagues or leaders to respond negatively.

Psychological safety primarily addresses the second problem. Edmondson's work established that learning behavior depends partly on whether interpersonal risk is perceived as safe. Newman and colleagues' systematic review demonstrates that psychological safety has subsequently been linked with numerous workplace processes. Innovation requires comparable risk because employees frequently reveal incomplete knowledge or advocate deviations from established practice.

Self-compassion addresses the first problem. Even a genuinely psychologically safe organization cannot guarantee that every innovative attempt will succeed. Nor can leaders prevent all disappointment, uncertainty, or self-doubt. Employees therefore benefit from internal resources that allow them to process unsuccessful outcomes without prolonged shame or global self-condemnation.

The two resources should consequently be viewed as complementary rather than competing. An organization cannot legitimately respond to punitive leadership by telling employees to become more self-compassionate. Equally, a supportive leader cannot completely regulate how employees interpret personal setbacks outside the immediate interaction.

The strongest innovation environment may therefore combine external permission to experiment with internal capacity to recover from imperfection. Baer and Frese's findings concerning psychological safety and process innovation support the organizational half of this proposition, while Engel and colleagues' experiment with entrepreneurial fear of failure supports the individual self-compassion mechanism.

6.3 Implications for Innovation Management and Employee Development

Organizations seeking more innovation should examine how they respond to failed attempts rather than only how they reward successful ones. Employees learn the real innovation climate from observable consequences. If leaders publicly celebrate creativity but privately penalize every unsuccessful experiment, employees will reasonably infer that innovation rhetoric is symbolic.

Psychological-safety research suggests that employees require credible evidence that speaking, questioning, experimenting, and admitting mistakes will not produce disproportionate interpersonal penalties. Innovation management should therefore distinguish between intelligent failure produced by disciplined experimentation and avoidable failure produced by negligence or repeated disregard of established evidence.

Self-compassion training may provide a complementary employee-development strategy. Kotera and Van Gordon's systematic review found promising evidence that self-compassion interventions can improve work-related well-being, while also emphasizing that the intervention literature requires greater methodological rigor and broader occupational testing. Organizations should therefore avoid presenting self-compassion programs as proven universal solutions.

A more credible implementation would embed self-compassion within existing learning processes. After-action reviews could ask what was learned without requiring self-blame. Managers could normalize revision by discussing their own changed decisions. Innovation teams could separate evaluation of an idea from evaluation of the person who proposed it. Employees could be encouraged to



respond to unsuccessful attempts with the same constructive accuracy they would offer a respected colleague.

The 2021 entrepreneurial experiment by Engel and colleagues is particularly instructive because self-compassion was not treated simply as a personality characteristic. A brief loving-kindness exercise increased self-compassion and produced an indirect reduction in fear reactivity through self-compassion. This suggests that at least some aspects of compassionate self-response may be trainable rather than completely fixed.

Workplace programs should nevertheless preserve accountability. Self-compassion does not imply declaring every idea good, ignoring poor preparation, or avoiding difficult performance feedback. Breines and Chen's evidence suggests almost the opposite: compassionate responses can support stronger motivation to correct weaknesses. The organizational objective should therefore be high standards without unnecessary self-punishment.

Future empirical research should first validate the proposed innovation-anxiety construct rather than assuming that it is identical to general workplace anxiety or fear of failure. Scale development should examine content validity, discriminant validity, reliability, temporal stability, and relationships with established constructs such as workplace anxiety, fear of failure, psychological safety, creative self-efficacy, innovative work behavior, perfectionism, and self-compassion.

Longitudinal and experience-sampling methods would be particularly valuable. Innovation anxiety may fluctuate from one project or meeting to another. Employees could report anxiety immediately before presenting new ideas, receive real feedback, and then report self-compassionate responding, rumination, willingness to revise, and subsequent innovation behavior. Such designs would allow researchers to test whether self-compassion predicts re-engagement after unsuccessful innovation episodes, which may be more organizationally meaningful than a single general anxiety score.

7. Conclusion

Innovation requires organizations to ask employees to enter situations in which success cannot be guaranteed. Novel ideas must be exposed before they are fully proven, experiments can reveal unexpected problems, and employees may have to advocate positions that challenge established practices. These conditions make some degree of uncertainty unavoidable. The central organizational question is therefore not how to eliminate all anxiety from innovation but how to prevent uncertainty from becoming psychologically disabling.

The present paper proposes self-compassion as one resource capable of moderating this process. Existing research indicates that self-compassion is associated with lower fear of failure, more adaptive responses to self-relevant setbacks, reduced anxiety under ego threat, and greater motivation for self-improvement. Engel and colleagues further demonstrated in an entrepreneurial context that self-compassion can be cultivated and that greater self-compassion is associated with lower fear reactivity to a threatening venture obstacle.

The simulation developed in this manuscript translates these findings into an organizational innovation model. Fear of failure was the strongest positive predictor of innovation anxiety, while self-compassion showed a substantial protective relationship. Psychological safety provided an additional contextual buffer, innovation pressure increased anxiety, and the negative self-compassion $\times$ fear-of-



failure interaction illustrated the proposed buffering mechanism. Innovation anxiety was also negatively related to simulated innovative work behavior. These numerical relationships are not empirical population estimates, but they establish a transparent framework for subsequent hypothesis testing.

“This attempt matters, I want to improve it, and its failure does not require me to attack my own worth.” That orientation differs from complacency. It allows rigorous evaluation while preserving sufficient psychological stability to try again. Organizations that combine this internal resource with genuine psychological safety may be better positioned to create innovation cultures in which employees can remain ambitious, accountable, curious, and willing to learn from uncertain outcomes.

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